DEMOCRACY: ETHNOGRAPHY AND SOCIAL THEORY
ANTHRCUL 558.005/SW870.001

Fall 2004
University of Michigan

As countries throughout the world have undergone transitions to democracy, scholars have often focused their attention on regime shifts, political parties, and formal institutions to explain political change. Yet experience in regions as diverse as Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, and countries of the former USSR, tell us that actually existing democracy is more complex than the creation of government institutions and more ambiguous than recent celebrations might suggest. As peoples in many parts of the world live at the intersection of neoliberal economics, development discourses, resurgent nationalisms, and technocratic states, the time is ripe to explore perspectives on democracy that derive from anthropological insights and ethnographic research. Such approaches connect local, national, and international processes; reveal the role of symbols in creating public meanings; critically examine public discourses; and view political processes with attention to the forms of power they enact.

This seminar offers new ways of viewing democracy by exploring the intersection of theoretical currents and ethnographic research. Students will read a series of rich ethnographic accounts on themes including participation, international aid organizations, globalization, social movements, and electoral processes. The ethnographies will also generate discussion about engaged research and the work of indigenous intellectuals. We will relate these accounts to theoretical currents including governmentality, hegemony, deliberative democracy, public sphere, civil society, and transnationalism. Readings will cover many parts of the world, and are intended to interest students working in both the United States and internationally.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

(1) **Class participation.** This is a seminar that relies on your active participation. Please make at least one (and hopefully quite a few) thoughtful comment(s) that are grounded in the readings and contribute to analysis at each session.

(2) **On-line commentary.** Please post responses to the readings by Sunday evening and come to class having read other students’ comments. Your contribution should include reflections on the readings and questions for class discussion.

(3) **Readings.** Please do all required reading listed below in time for class participation and on-line comments.

(4) **Facilitating discussion.** Each week, one student will be responsible for giving a short analytic overview of the reading, providing necessary background information, and raising questions for discussion (total time: 15 minutes). The following week, the student will post online a written summary including: his or her comments, a record of the class discussion, ongoing questions for deliberation, and a supplementary bibliography.

(5) **Written work.** A written assignment will be due at the end of the semester. You have two options: (1) write a paper in which you use course readings to analyze your own empirical work. Keep in mind that the assignment is primarily about synthesizing and using theory, not collecting primary data, so this project will only work if you already have original research materials related to democracy. (2) If you do not have your own primary data, you can do a take-home exam. The exam will consist of a set of shorter identification/definition questions, plus a number of longer essay questions that ask you to synthesize the readings from the class.

   In both assignments, please write in a professional way -- you are honing your skills in using theory and aiming to create a compelling scholarly account. Please keep a photocopy of all written work you submit, and please back up your computer files.

READINGS

**Obtaining Texts**

Required books are available for purchase at Shaman Drum bookstore, 734-662-7407. Copies will be on reserve at Shapiro undergraduate library. Articles will be available on CTools.

**Required Books**
- Nina Eliasoph, *Avoiding Politics: How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life*
- Steven Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community*
- Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*
- Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*
- Julia Paley, *Marketing Democracy: Power and Social Movements in Post-Dictatorship Chile*

**READING SCHEDULE**

1. **September 13**
   **Introduction:**
   Ethnography and Social Theory of Democracy

   **Recommended readings:**
   - David Held, *Models of Democracy*

2. **September 20**
   **Public Sphere and Deliberative Democracy**

   **Required Readings**
   **Overview**
   Julia Paley, “Toward an Anthropology of Democracy”

   **Public Sphere**
   - Jürgen Habermas, “The Public Sphere”
   - Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy”
   - Michael C. Dawson, “A Black Counterpublic?: Economic Earthquakes, Racial Agenda(s), and Black Politics.”

   **Deliberative Democracy:**
   - Jürgen Habermas, “Deliberative Democracy”
   - Iris Marion Young, “Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy”

   **Recommended:**
- Geoff Eley, “Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century”

3 September 27 Hegemony

Nina Eliasoph, *Avoiding Politics: How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life*

Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks* (selections on hegemony)

4 October 4 Gender, Race, Ethnicity – Is Multiculturalism a Solution?

Readings:
- Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases* (selections)
- Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”

5 October 11 Politics and Identity

Steven Gregory, *Black Corona*

October 18 fall break, no class

6 October 25 Governmentality and Social Movements

Required Readings:
- Michel Foucault, “Governmentality”
- Susan Brin Hyatt, “From Citizen to Volunteer: Neoliberal Governance and the Erasure of Poverty”
- Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks* (selections on organic intellectuals)
### Recommended Readings:
- Barbara Cruikshank, *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects*

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>7 November</td>
<td>Participation and Community Organizations</td>
<td>Julia Paley, <em>Marketing Democracy: Power and Social Movements in Post-Dictatorship Chile</em></td>
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| 8 November | Development Agencies, Democracy Promotion, and Elections | Required Readings:  
  - Harry G. West and Scott Kloeck-Jenson, “Betwixt and Between: ‘Traditional Authority’ and Democratic Decentralization in Post-War Mozambique”  
  - Thomas Carothers, “The End of the Transition Paradigm”  
  - Steven Sampson, “The Social Life of Projects: Importing Civil Society to Albania”  
  - Ruth Mandel, “Seeding Civil Society”  
  - Andrew Apter, “IBB = 419: Nigerian Democracy and the Politics of Illusion”  

| Date       | Colonialism and Citizenship               | Recommended Readings:  
  - Akhil Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India*  
  - William Miles, *Elections in Nigeria: A Grassroots Perspective* |
| 9 November  | The State and Transnationalism           | Readings:  
  - Michael Taussig, *The Nervous System* (selections) |
- Begoña Aretxaga, “A Fictional Reality: Paramilitary Death Squads and the Construction of State Terror in Spain”
- Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “The Anthropology of the State in the Age of Globalization”
- Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy”

11 December 6 Transnationalism

Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*

12 December 13 Conclusions: Ethnographic Perspectives on Democracy